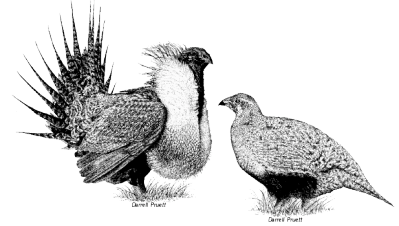


Final*

Meeting Summary



* Provisional until approved by SAC at April 2009 SAC meeting

Date: January 29, 2009

Meeting: Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee

Location: Boise, Idaho (IDFG, MK Nature Center)

January 29, 2009

In attendance (some or all of the meeting): Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG), Sam Chandler (Big Desert LWG), Bonnie Claridge (BLM), Jack Depperschmidt (DOE – Idaho), Arthur Dick (Shoshone-Paiute Tribes), Brett Dumas (Idaho Power), David Ellis (Challis LWG), Elizabeth Felix (IDL), Frank Fink (NRCS), Steve Goddard (IWF), Gene Gray (West Central LWG), Tom Hemker (IDFG), Joe Hinson (NW Natural Resource Group), Rich Howard (ICL), Don Kemner (IDFG), Paul Makela (BLM), Rob Mickelsen (USFS), Ann Moser (IDFG), Rochelle Oxarango (Idaho Wool Growers), Bill Platts (Citizen), Wendy Pratt (East Idaho Uplands LWG), Julie Randell (South Magic Valley LWG), John Robison (ICL), John Romero (ICA), Michael Remming (Jarbidge LWG), Alan Sands (IDFG, TNC), Alison Squier (Facilitator, Ziji Creative Resources), Joseph Terry (Curlew LWG), Natalie Turley (Idaho Power), Nathan Welch (North Magic Valley LWG), and Rich Yankey (Shoshone Basin LWG).

Review Agenda and Opening Introductions

Alison reviewed the agenda with the meeting participants. Because there are a number of new SAC members, she proposed an exercise to help get to know one another better. Each participant at the meeting was asked to interview someone they didn't know well and then introduce that person. The interview questions were:

- 1) Who are you?
- 2) What LWG are you with (and anything else you want to share about the LWG)?
- 3) What are the top three things that SAC should do (i.e., the role of the SAC)?
- 4) What gives you the most joy in life?
- 5) Mystery question (you figure out something else to learn about the person you're interviewing).

Following are the participant responses regarding the role of the SAC:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provide guidance to LWG▪ Organize concerns of LWG to communicate to others▪ Find funding for sage-grouse▪ Statewide coordination/communication▪ Foster landscape scale restoration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conduit between LWGs▪ Prevent listing▪ Input to agencies▪ Education and funding▪ Acquire funding▪ Lobby for funding for projects |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinated voice for sage-grouse ▪ Provide assistance to LWGs ▪ Address sage-grouse needs ▪ Bring diverse groups together in the name of sage-grouse ▪ Facilitate funding for LWG sage-grouse projects ▪ Bring all interests together ▪ Promote collaboration and cooperation ▪ Give guidance to agencies and others ▪ Provide unity among LWGs ▪ Share information with LWGs ▪ SAC members take information back to their LWGs ▪ Make recommendations for project funding ▪ Share information between LWGs ▪ Share info among LWGs, agencies, and land-owners ▪ Need to do better job connecting landowners and agencies ▪ Inform and provide guidance ▪ Bring people together ▪ Get input from different groups to help make management decisions ▪ Bring sage-grouse back to past population numbers ▪ Increase quality habitat in the state ▪ Advise the LWGs ▪ Continue work on state plan and revisions of the plan ▪ Identify funding ▪ Coordinate with LWGs ▪ Enhance sage-grouse habitat ▪ Assist LWGs ▪ Use as vehicle to stop ESA listing ▪ Provide a conduit between LWGs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give agencies an idea of what the public thinks (through LWGs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer meaningful information back to LWGs ▪ Meaningfully guide policy ▪ Provide funding recommendations ▪ One huge team! ▪ Guide folks to get things done on the ground particularly at landscape scale ▪ Foster implementation of projects to benefit sage-grouse ▪ Venue to share successes and failures – learn from other LWGs ▪ Forum for agency and non-agency folks to coordinate ▪ Bring diverse groups together ▪ Protect and maintain sage-grouse and habitat at local and landscape level ▪ Write state plan, implement plan and revise as necessary. ▪ Bring diverse groups together ▪ Provide guidance ▪ Preserve habitat and expand the range of sage-grouse ▪ Provide guidance for implementation of state-wide and local plans ▪ Provide funding ▪ Involve grassroots communities in management of sage-grouse ▪ Advise LWGs ▪ Identify funding ▪ Provide advice to improve sage-grouse populations without sacrificing people's livelihoods ▪ Make use of best science ▪ Common ground ▪ Coordination ▪ Provide direction to LWGs ▪ Fund on the ground projects ▪ Advise and coordinate with agencies |
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SAC Business Items

The following SAC business items were reviewed as part of the meeting agenda.

Establish 2009 Meeting Ground Rules

Alison asked the participants to identify new ground rules for 2009. She noted that the group could change or add to these ground rules at any time during the meeting or in future meetings. Participants identified the following ground rules for 2009:

- Cell phones off
- Be willing to listen to each other
- Respect each other
- Honor diversity
- No Bomb throwing
- Come prepared

- Talk about interests not positions
- Speak one at a time
- Sit down before Alison yells

Introduce Don Kemner

Tom Hemker explained that in his new job position with IDFG he will still be involved with sage-grouse issues but that the majority of his focus will be on range-wide and landscape scale issues. Don Kemner has volunteered to take on the day-to-day coordination with the SAC and LWGs. Tom talked a little about Don's background and noted that he think Don will be a great contribution the IDFG sage-grouse team which now includes Tom (coordinating big picture stuff), Ann Moser (working on data sets, mapping, OSC grants, etc.), and Don Kemner (providing coordination with SAC and LWG), as well as David Smith (who makes all the magic happen when it comes to food and meeting logistics). Don has started visiting the different LWGs and hopes to make it to all of them in the near term.

October SAC Meeting Summary Approval

Alison explained that she had received edits and corrections to the October SAC meeting summary by the deadline from Jack Depperschmidt and Ann Moser.

She noted that she had also received an email from Julie Randell the previous week expressing concern that Tom Perry's comments from the October meeting were not included in the notes. Alison explained that she had been in and out of the room during Tom's comments and was not able to provide any input. She asked if any of the other SAC members had notes about Tom's comments. Donna Bennett did have some notes. The group agreed to approve the October SAC Meeting Summary as presented in the provisional notes (i.e., includes all corrections/edits provided by the deadline).

In addition to the summary of discussion at the January meeting, per agreement of the group, Donna Bennett's notes from the October meeting reflecting Tom Perry's comments are included below:

- *Statewide?? Only applies to state or private lands currently. If everybody did this there would be no need to list bird. Who will monitor CCAA's? Most SG habitat is on Federal land so who will do this? It is not applicable on Federal Lands. Most important thing a LWG can do now is mapping. Identify where leks are, birds are, nesting, brood rearing, wintering etc. West Central CCAA needs to be completed so that it can be watched for how it works. Candidate Conservation does not provide assurances like CCAA does. Safe Harbor is Post listing on private lands.*

In response to Julie's concerns about the completeness of the meeting summary and ensuring an open and transparent process, Alison led the group in the following discussion about the purpose of, and desired approach to, the SAC meeting summary/notes.

SAC Agreement

Participants approved the provisional October 2008 SAC meeting summary. The final meeting summary will be posted on the IDFG web site.

Discussion: Approach to SAC Meeting Summary/Notes

Alison summarized the current approach:

- Alison drafts a meeting summary, which is intended primarily to capture agreements and assignments. The meeting summary also provides a summary of key discussions. If a PowerPoint is used for a presentation, Alison provides additional notes from that and/or will provide the full PowerPoint to the SAC. She noted that the meeting summary is not intended to provide verbatim minutes.
- Once the draft meeting summary is complete she sends it to the SAC and asks for corrections, edits, or comments. She provides a deadline for corrections/additions (usually within 2-3 weeks of the SAC meeting).
- She incorporates the recommended edits etc. then the notes are distributed to the full SAC and posted on the IDFG web site as provisional (as of October 2008) until the next quarterly meeting when the SAC approves or disapproves the final notes.
- Once the meeting summary is finalized the “final meeting summary” is posted on the web site.

The group considered what the purpose of meeting notes/meeting summary is e.g., to record agreements, to help keep the group from sliding backward on decisions reached, to help SAC members communicate with their LWGs.

The group briefly discussed different approaches to recording meetings (e.g., a meeting summary similar to what Alison currently does; a Group Memory approach as Wendy Lowe does, which mostly captures agreements; have 1 or 2 others take notes and combine all into a meeting summary; record and transcribe the notes; record the meeting but don't transcribe).

The group had a lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of different ways to take meeting notes. Some of the major issues included:

- Some folks thought the meeting summary as currently done works well
- Others said they would like a more detailed record or recording so that they could go back to it for more detail or answer a particular question
- If things are left out, some felt it would undermine confidence in the group
- Some people felt that participants might not be as candid if the meetings were recorded and that it would hamper a collaborative process and teamwork
- Other people felt the notes should just capture the business and agreements
- The group also talked about the logistics of having a transcription typed up and the length of notes if this were done; another approach discussed was to record the meetings but have the facilitator hold the recording and only use it to fill in gaps upon request or provide clarifications

Tom concluded the discussion by reminding all that the SAC meeting summary should be used to help the LWG representatives take important information back to their LWG. SAC notes are also provided to the facilitators and IDFG representatives to LWGs.

SAC Agreement

The group agreed to the approach identified below for the January meeting and also agreed to revisit the issue at the April SAC meeting:

- Ann Moser and David Smith will take notes and provide those to Alison to augment her own notes.

- Alison will compile and send the meeting summary to all that attended the meeting.
- Comments and corrections will be due within 2-3 weeks (February 20, 2009).
- She will incorporate the changes she receives by the deadline.
- The provisional meeting summary will be sent to the full SAC and posted on the IDFG website.
- SAC will approve/disapprove the revised draft (provisional) meeting summary at the April SAC meeting.
- Once final the meeting summary will be posted on the IDFG website as “Final”

Discussion: Potential Development of SAC Charter

The group engaged in a brief discussion about the pros and cons of developing a SAC charter. Alison asked the group if this was something they wanted to consider since the question of the role of the SAC came up repeatedly in LWGs and in the SAC.

Discussion:

- Tom H. reviewed the history of the SAC and reminded everyone that the SAC needs to represent a broad range of interests and that it must be collaborative. He also talked about the process used to appoint SAC members in the past.
- Tom H. reviewed the contents of the letter the IDFG Director sends to people when they are appointed to the SAC.
- Many LWGs have a charter and it is often one of the first things they do when the group is formed. A charter generally describes in writing, one or more of the following: 1) the group’s role, purpose, and function; 2) membership; 3) rules that members agree to abide by.
- Another topic a charter might include would be clarification of how members are selected, who is encouraged to participate, etc. Some members talked about the importance of putting in writing the idea that the SAC should include non-agency representatives from LWGs whenever possible.
- Some participants talked about drafting a mission statement for the SAC instead of a charter and thought that would have greater value.

SAC Agreement and Follow-up Actions

- Participants agreed to think more about the pros and cons of a SAC Charter and discuss again at the April 2009 meeting.
- Alison will send out a copy of the appointment letter and any information about the SAC’s role that is written in the State Plan.
- Each SAC member should review these documents and draft suggestions for a mission statement and/or charter and send those to Alison by February 20, 2009
- Alison will compile all responses and the group will discuss a mission statement and/or charter for the SAC at the April 2009 SAC meeting.

Follow-Up Items from October 2008 SAC Meeting

The following items were identified as actions at the October 2008 SAC meeting.

Update on Fence Deterrent Research Project

Tom H. and Paul M. provided an update on the “tall structures project,” which addressed sage-grouse collisions with fences and other tall structures, such as MET towers. The University of Idaho graduate student working on this project just finished his proposal and identified study areas. The SAC has approved 3 fence-marking projects in the last 2 years.

Tom asked that the project proponents with new project contact Ann Moser to determine whether the projects fall within the graduate student’s study area. If the project is not in the study area, they still should coordinate their projects with Ann because it is important that we monitor these projects.

Many people are interested in this project, so Don K. and Alison will see if the graduate student can give a presentation at the April or July SAC meeting.

Follow-up actions

- Project proponents on new project proposals involving fencing should coordinate with Ann Moser to determine if the project falls within the study area.
- Don and Alison will look into having the graduate student give a presentation on the project at the April or July SAC meeting.

Funding for East Idaho Uplands Telemetry Project

At the July SAC meeting, the East Idaho Uplands telemetry project was put on hold because the LWG was also proposing to do lek searches at the same time. At that time Tom, said the group should complete that lek search project prior to the telemetry project. However, since then, the East Idaho Uplands LWG explained that the lek search was for the north part of the planning area, while the telemetry project was being proposed for the south near Bear Lake, where they know the location of several leks. The issue was raised again at the October SAC meeting and Tom promised to look again to see if there were funds available.

Tom indicated that funding for next year’s OSC projects is very uncertain right now and that there are no funds available at this time to do the telemetry project. He also suggested that looking to the future, a telemetry project should be at least a 3-year project. Given the uncertainty of funding, he said that this project should remain on-hold until funding can be secured for the future. Tom recommended that the group refine their proposal and resubmit next year.

Sam Chandler noted that in the future it is important to educate new SAC members about how the funding process works. He commented that if their group had better understood the process, and particularly that the SAC representatives need to be able to answer a lot of questions about their group’s project, they would have presented additional information that might have led to the initial funding of the project.

Use of OSC Funds as Non-Federal Match

Note: this item was incorrectly conveyed on the agenda. The agenda said the discussion item was use of NRCS funds as non-federal match.

The purpose of the agenda item was to seek confirmation that sage-grouse funds dispersed by OSC can be used as non-federal match on NRCS project. Frank Fink confirmed that for NRCS projects, the source of the funds (federal vs. non-federal) does not matter. Therefore, OSC-funded projects can provide match for NRCS projects.

Additional Infrastructure Letters from SAC

The SAC sent a comment letter on the Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI) project per SAC agreement at the October 2008 meeting. At that meeting SAC members also agreed that they wanted to send similar letters recommending that sage-grouse populations and their habitats be considered in the development of the Environmental Impact Statements for the Gateway West (Idaho Power) transmission line project and for the China Mountain Wind Power Project (China Mountain Wind, LLC).

Alison was asked to draft letters after the last SAC meeting but she explained that she had not had time to do so and asked for a SAC volunteer to write the letters. Wendy Pratt volunteered to draft letters for the SAC to review at the April 2009 meeting.

Brett Dumas asked the group to consider whether the role of the SAC as to be an advisory or advocacy group. He asked what types of projects or activities the SAC comments on and why. The group discussed this issue briefly and reviewed the agreements they had reached at the October meeting which included the following:

- *SAC members agreed that LWGs should make their own decisions regarding submitting comments on infrastructure activities within their planning area.*
- *SAC members agreed that an appropriate role for the SAC to play was to comment (when possible and when there is the possibility of developing agreement) on landscape scale issues, or infrastructure projects that might impact more than one LWG (e.g., MSTI project).*

Following is a summary of the discussion from the October meeting regarding the content of the MSTI and other infrastructure letters:

- The SAC letter does not support a particular alternative or decision.
- The letter(s) should indicate that 1) sage-grouse populations and habitat should be considered in the scoping process; 2) the infrastructure threat discussion and conservation actions from the Idaho state sage-grouse plan should be considered in the scoping and in the development of alternatives; 3) additional alternatives should be considered that avoid impacts to sage-grouse; and 4) where possible routes should be matched with other developed areas e.g., roads.

Follow-up Actions

- Alison will send Wendy examples letters on these projects from LWGs.
- Wendy will provide draft letters for the SAC's April meeting in Dubois.

LWG Borders

At the July and October SAC meetings LWG representatives from some of the LWGs (i.e., Upper Snake and Big Desert) brought up the question of the relationship of hunting zones (and associated harvest reports) to LWG boundaries. At that time, Tom H. had promised to visit with the LWG facilitator to discuss the issue and report back to the SAC at the January meeting. Don Kemner had followed up on the issue for Tom and had spoken with Wendy Lowe and visited with the LWGs.

Don summarized the range of issues associated with LWG boundaries. Don explained that as he understood it there were four categories of issue related to boundaries:

- Changes to LWG boundaries in groups that have already completed their plans (e.g., changes to boundaries between adjacent LWGs)
 - Generally this would occur because – a LWG wants to make more logical boundaries between existing LWGs, a group wants to include a sage-grouse population that falls outside of a LWG planning area, or to include a landowner that wasn't previously included and wants to be.
 - Don suggested that changes to boundaries between adjacent groups should be resolved at the LWG level between the LWGs that are impacted.
 - Changes to boundaries after a LWG plan is completed are potentially problematic because an expansion could include a group of people or landowners who were not involved in the plan development.
- Changes to a LWG boundary prior to completion of the LWG plan.
 - Many LWGs have amended their boundaries from what was depicted in the State Plan as part of the early stages of their planning process.
 - Some groups have simplified their boundaries by going to nearby highways or extending to neighboring group boundaries.
 - Some have altered boundaries to include additional sage-grouse habitat.
 - This is a topic that is appropriately dealt with at the LWG level.
 - Other groups after a LWG plan has been completed.
- Relationship of LWG boundaries to lek data.
 - Getting proper lek data within a LWG boundary is not a problem since a lek has an associated location that can be mapped in relation to the LWG boundary.
- Hunting zones or harvest reporting boundaries.
 - As currently exists, harvest data does not correspond to LWG boundaries. This has been problematic to LWGs while preparing their plans and completing their annual report.
 - Harvest reporting zones were set up several years ago to represent what was currently known about sage-groups ecology and populations.
 - Harvest data has been collected the same way for several years.
 - IDFG will have to evaluate the potential to change boundaries.
 - It is important to remember that if changes are made, we will lose the ability to compare new information to what was reported in the past.

The group also talked a little about the possibility of asking LWGs to think about any proposed changes to their LWG boundaries in advance of revisions to the state plan.

For the time being, LWGs are encouraged to contact Don Kemner with questions about boundary issues or if you would like Don to come to a LWG to discuss potential approaches or to help coordinate with other LWGs.

LWG and Other Updates

- **Steve Goddard (IWF)** – Steve has been reviewing some new studies in Wyoming concerning the effects of oil and gas development on sage-grouse.
- **Julie Randell (South Magic Valley LWG)** – The SMV had its 1st public meeting on July 28. They've had 4 meetings since then and have about 13 members. They have developed a group charter, including qualifications for voting membership (must attend 3-5 meetings). They have made boundary amendments. They have an existing telemetry project near Oakley. They also had a habitat restoration approved and funded last year; this project re-seeded 250 acres on private land after a fire. Monitoring will begin this summer.
- **Paul Makela (BLM)** – Healthy Lands Initiative funding is uncertain for 2009 pending a final budget from Washington and maybe even more uncertain for 2010, given the economy and interest in an economic stimulus package. The update to the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map is taking place right now. In addition to 2008 wildfire information, BLM field office biologists have coordinated with other agency biologists and LWGs to get the best local information about habitat changes. Edits are being made by local BLM GIS staff, and will be rolled into a statewide coverage. The 2008 map will be available on Inside Idaho by March 1. Idaho BLM issued an Instruction Memorandum in November 2008, which reiterated BLM's commitment to use the State Plan and LWG plans for guidance. It also included requirements about the installation of new MET towers on BLM land, including that no new MET towers are allowed within 2 miles of an occupied lek, unless there is a visual barrier (e.g. due to topography) between them. In addition MET tower guy wires must have visible markers to reduce collisions of sage-grouse and other wildlife. The BLM is also initiated discussions with IDFG regarding development of a "next generation" sage-grouse map, which would provide more habitat detail than the current Habitat Planning Map. The project needs partner funding, and if funded, would take at least 2 years to complete.
- **Elizabeth Felix (IDL)** – IDL plans to develop CCAAs are on-hold due to funding issues. IDL needs revenue from its grazing lands to meet their mandate and this will need to be taken into consideration as things move forward.
- **Dave Ellis (Challis LWG)** – They are not meeting very often now that their plan is completed. They do have a boundary conflict with the Upper Snake, but they are planning on discussion to resolve this locally. They are working on mapping seasonal habitats.
- **Joe Terry (Curlew LWG)** – They have had 1 meeting since the last SAC meeting. The group wanted to know about the funding status of their fence marking project (they will discuss further with Ann Moser). Pete Coates of USGS gave a presentation on his raven study in northern Nevada. He is also

working on a similar project on the INL. Pete discussed non-lethal methods to control ravens, and that it is often human influences that increase the population. He found that if you kill local ravens, that “floaters” will move in and establish new territory rather quickly. The Curlew LWG would like to sponsor a similar project in their area. They will need to find \$30,000 to get the project started.

- **Rich Howard (ICL)** – Rich has been attending energy conferences and learning more about the issues.
- **Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG)** – The LWG met last week. They discussed their juniper mastication project. Art Talsma and Jim Desmond are heading up the project. They are also looking at juniper encroachment into aspen and are hoping to get cooperative funds from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. They currently have 3 project areas selected and will be putting out bids for a contractor for the project in the near future. They plan to get started this spring/summer. Mike Pellant came and gave them his cheatgrass presentation. The group was very interested in this presentation. Carl Rudeen from the Air Force also discussed some of the studies they have conducted on using Plateau on cheatgrass. They found it to be very effective in controlling cheatgrass and increasing sagebrush vigor; however, it also seemed to result in an increase in Russian thistle. Their next meeting is March 18.
- **Arthur Dick (Shoshone-Paiute)** – They had 21 birds with radio-collars this year. They’ve only had 2 mortalities to date, neither of which were due to West Nile virus. They are planning a habitat restoration project where they will be planting sagebrush seedlings into a 13 year-old burn.
- **Gene Gray (West Central LWG)** – The group meets about every 2-3 months including a BBQ in July. Their draft CCAA is their LWG plan. The group has 1 habitat project, which was completed in December. The landowner used a Lawson aerator to reduce the shrub cover in an over-mature sagebrush/bitterbrush stand. The idea is to reduce the shrub cover to allow the understory to increase. As the Lawson aerator rolls over the shrubs, its cleats also make holes in the ground, creating a bed for the seeding which follows. Weiser NRCS is monitoring the project. As Gene was following some radioed birds last year, he noted tapeworms in the feces of 3 birds. Strangely enough, fecal samples from the same birds in December had no tapeworms! Gene was wondering if the diet change to more sagebrush in winter had an affect on these parasites. The West Central LWG is always concerned about new subdivisions and, to that end they have developed a positive relationship with Washington County Planning and Zoning. A commissioner now regularly attends their meetings. Funding for the West Central’s radio-telemetry project is running out, but they are hoping to find additional funds for the future. They have found that their birds are moving greater distances than expected, include down to the Hells Canyon breaks and into Oregon. Their 2007 report was recently completed and the 2008 report is in progress. Last year, they began lek surveys earlier than usual because Gene suspected (and several landowners concurred) that peak attendance was earlier than what is suggested for sage-grouse surveys in the rest of the state. Their work did discover that hens are usually on the leks about 2 weeks earlier than most areas.
- **Frank Fink (NRCS)** – EQIP and WHIP sign-up deadline is February 13, 2009. Funding is a concern for the future. There have been some internal rule changes on some programs. You can see the proposed changes in the Federal Register and comments are due soon. The NRCS is also considering a national ranking process for some program and, therefore, county funding allocations may change. The dead-

line for the national Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) program is March 2, 2009. The CIG program funds new technologies, including for natural resources, which help inform NRCS programs. CIG is also available at the state level. NRCS and IDFG have been working together on several brush management projects in eastern Idaho. The NRCS is currently updating its fencing standards, including wildlife-friendly fences. Frank would like to talk to Paul and others about fence marking, because this update is being done now. In addition, the NRCS did update its brush management standard, which now incorporates sage-grouse habitat guidelines.

- *Follow-up notes: As discussed at the SAC meeting Frank provided the following web site for people to view the Interim Program Rules for the new Farm Bill. SAC members may be particularly interested in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), etc.*
- *Comments on these rules are due from Mid March to the end of March see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2008/index.html>*
- **Jack Depperschmidt (INL)** – DOE is currently working on the NEPA for a project about transporting and treating waste. One alternative would improve a two track road to a gravel road in sage-grouse habitat. The Upper Snake Local Working Group has provided comments on that proposal. The Wildlife Conservation Society is conducting a telemetry study on the INL Site. Most birds move off the INL Site during the late summer; about 75% of the birds are currently back on or very near INL Site. They plan on radio-collaring about 50 more birds this year. Stoller will be surveying historical leks on the INL Site this spring to determine their current status.
- **Sam Chandler (Big Desert LWG)** – Their plan is moving forward. They have 2 on-going habitat projects. The sagebrush seedlings have been planted and the fire breaks project will continue this spring. They are expanding their boundary to the east. Sam remarked that LWG participation has been down.
- **Nathan Welch (North Magic Valley LWG)** – Reagan Berkeley of IDFG has been facilitating their recent meetings, but Mike Pepper will be their new facilitator. The group is behind schedule to complete their plan, but at their last meeting they approved a plan as to how to proceed on plan development. The group sends out periodic notes to the media about their meetings to keep up local interests and involve new members. The group has decided that new members must have attended at 6 of the last 12 meetings in order to participate in consensus decisions. One of their LWG members suggested that new local groups should receive a packet of helpful information; the North Magic LWG is considering a similar thing for new members to their group. The group continues to provide input about the new Hailey Airport. One alternative will consume about 2,500 acres of sagebrush.
- **Wendy Pratt (East Idaho Uplands)** – The group has 2 threats to develop for their draft plan. Because the group membership is spread out, they had been trying meetings by conference phone, but they decided that it didn't work so well. They are now meeting in Pocatello. They are expanding their LWG boundary to the west to the Curlew LWG boundary. The group is concerned about continued local involvement. There are 3 wind power proposals in their area, which would have >1,000 wind towers.
- **Rob Mickelson (USFS)** – Several of the forests, including the Curlew National Grassland, are working on sagebrush mapping efforts. Rob also reported on 2 Curlew LWG projects that are on the Curlew

National Grassland. One project is experimental trials investigating different methods to reseed grasses and forbs on the Curlew. They also included 3 different sagebrush establishment trials: 1) no seeding, 2) broadcast seeding, and 3) planting seedlings. The 2nd project seeded forage kochia as green strips to protect remaining dense sagebrush stands on the Curlew National Grassland. Seeding was completed this winter.

- **John Romereo (ICA)** – ICA is concerned about the several large infrastructure projects and particularly how they affect a potential sage-grouse listing. ICA wants to ensure that conservationists are able to have input in these projects.
- **Rich Yankey (Shoshone Basin LWG)** –The Shoshone Basin LWG has formed subcommittees to strategize about what's next for the group. They are working on habitat goals, and continuing to coordinate grazing on private and public lands. They will invite new landowners to their March meeting. They are also ready to hire a new facilitator.
- **Mike Remming (Jarbidge LWG)** – Their last meeting was in November; their next meeting is next week.. They have formed two subcommittees. One is working on drafting internal criteria for projects. The goal of the other subcommittee is to rewrite their LWG plan to consider recent landscape change. IDFG will be conducting helicopter lek surveys this spring in the Murphy Complex Fire. Their radio-telemetry project to study sage-grouse movements in relation to the burn is scheduled to start in late March.
- **Brett Dumas (Idaho Power)** – Idaho Power is working with BLM to develop sage-grouse mitigation plans for the Gateway West project. Brett and Natalie Turley are continuing to refine their investigation into power line/lek interactions. They are considering publishing this work.
- **Alan Sands (IDFG and TNC)** – Alan has been coordinating a fire restoration project at Bear Den Butte, which is in the North Magic Valley Planning Area. Similar to the Murphy Complex Fire, restoration and seeding for this project also went across BLM and IDL boundaries. Alan reminded us that the Restoration Emphasis Areas (REAs) have to depend on local knowledge until we get a better habitat map based on satellite imagery. Also REAs in the Jarbidge need to be re-done, since they were developed before the Murphy Complex Fire.
- **Joe Hinson (Northwest Natural Resources Group)** – Joe updated us on the status of the West Central CCAA (see item later in notes). Joe is also working with graduate student Jeff G. on the illustrated sage-grouse guide. Jeff plans on visiting the LWGs this spring/summer to get their input. Joe reported on Eva Strand's GIS work. Eva is from the University of Idaho and developed a procedure to map sagebrush cover (high, medium, and low shrub cover) in the West Central planning area. Eva has a grant to work on the Re-GAP project. Her new graduate student might be able to use some of this work to develop similar information for other LWGs. Finally, Joe is working on a GIS project in Wyoming, which seeks to minimize infrastructure impacts to sage-grouse during the planning phases. The program maps sage-grouse leks and sagebrush, then incorporates engineering constraints, to come up with alternatives that minimize impacts to sage-grouse. Brett Dumas said Idaho Power used a similar planning tool for Gateway West.

Update on USFWS Status Review

Tom provided a brief update on the USFWS Status Review noting that a decision is not anticipated until about summer of 2009. He provided a handout on the Interim Status Update from the USFWS website which included the links to:

- Greater Sage-grouse Interim Status Report – October 31, 2008
- Transmittal memo from Region 6 Regional Director – Interim Status Update (December 16, 2008)
- Transmittal Memo from FWS Director – Interim Status Update (December 18, 2008)

The Interim Status Report and Transmittal Memos and other information can be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse>

Update on Status of West Central CCAA

Joe Hinson provided an update us on the status of the West Central CCAA. Joe, Tom Hemker, and Kendra Womack met with a representative from the USFWS's Portland office to review the draft CCAA. Joe said they are currently working to clarify the implementation process. The revised document is more streamlined now. The document is about 4-6 weeks away from formal submission to the USFWS, at which point it will be opened up for public review.

SAC TAT Report and Discussion

Changes to funding solicitation materials and process for 2009.

Ann Moser reported that the SAC TAT made the changes that were suggested at the July SAC meeting to the Cooperative Sage-Grouse Project Application form. The goal of the changes was to help people write better proposals. Ann Moser reviewed the draft changes.

Mike Remming suggested that the SAC TAT look into potential changes to the Grant Agreement Form because there may be a need to hold landowners accountable. Ann and Don will look at HIP agreement form to see if there is language the IDFG should incorporate in the Grant Agreement.

Review timing and status of 2009 funding solicitation

Tom H. explained that it is unknown whether there will be any funding available for 2009 projects. However, he encouraged everyone to go ahead and develop project proposals since funding may come through, or they may be other funds available through the stimulus bill or through other sources.

The group reviewed and confirmed the timing of the 2009 funding solicitation and discussed changes to the subcommittee review process that had been used in the past. Many SAC members felt that the subcommittee review prior to the SAC review was not a good use of time since the full SAC ends up reviewing all the projects anyway. Also, SAC members and those who were on the subcommittee in 2008 noted there was not enough time to review the project proposals prior to discussing them. After some discussion participants agreed to a revised timeline for the 2009 project solicitation and SAC review process.

Ann also noted that she would be willing and available to review draft proposals from LWGs and that the SAC TAT was available to provide help in developing monitoring and evaluation plans for the projects and for general technical coordination.

SAC Agreement

Date	What
2/15/09	▪ Distribute RFP packets (including cover letter, description of process, who to send application form to, application form, etc.) to all of the LWGs via the LWG facilitators and/or IDFG reps.
7/1/09	▪ Proposals due to IDFG
7/8/09	▪ Packet of all proposals distributed to full SAC for review
7/15/09	▪ SAC members submit any questions on the proposals to Ann Moser and Don Kemner. ▪ Ann and Don will contact project proponents to get answers to the SAC questions. ▪ Ann and Don will let project proponents know that the SAC will be meeting to discuss the proposals on July 28 and 29 and invite proponents to provide a phone number and be available to answer any additional questions by phone if possible.
7/28 and 7/29	▪ Full SAC will review and rank project proposals and develop recommendation for IDFG and OSC Directors. ▪ SAC TAT will develop "HIP" form for inclusion in Funding Agreement

Habitat mapping

Ann gave a brief update on some of the sage-grouse habitat mapping projects that are currently underway. Right now they are working on seasonal habitat mapping and restoration emphasis area mapping. She explained that there are a number of different mapping efforts currently underway. One of the challenges is to coordinate all of them. Once different mapping efforts are combined the different layers will begin to feed into one another to build detail.

Update: Conservation Mitigation Subcommittee

Discussion was tabled until next meeting since Lynn Burtenshaw was not present. Tom H. noted that Joe Hinson will be working with OSC and the Idaho Office of Energy Resources to develop a summary of current approaches to mitigation for energy development. Alison noted that the Chapter 6 Subcommittee will also be reviewing potential actions and timelines for development of a standard approach to conservation/mitigation.

Follow-up Action

- Put conservation/mitigation subcommittee report on April SAC agenda. Ann, Don and/or Alison to follow-up with subcommittee members.

Chapter 6 Revision

Ann reviewed provided participants with a copy of a Chapter 6 strawman that the Chapter 6 subcommittee will use as a starting point.

Alison reviewed the proposed process for Chapter 6 revision and completion:

- The subcommittee will meet regularly for approximately one day or one and a half day meetings until the Chapter 6 revision is complete (hopefully four meetings total or close to that).
- The subcommittee will review, edit, revise and if necessary augment, the draft strawman document distributed at the January 29 SAC meeting (plus the IDL edits that came a little late), line by line, starting at the beginning and working to the end.

- Consensus will be developed on Chapter 6 with the individuals who are present at the meeting (i.e., in the room).
- The Chapter 6 subcommittee is open to all SAC members who wish to participate AND who are willing to commit to attend all (or as close as possible to all) of the meetings.
- We won't go back to revisit consensus agreements if you weren't able to make a meeting (we go forwards, not backwards).
- The full SAC and all of the LWGs will have an opportunity to review and comment on the final product that the subcommittee develops.

Follow-up Action

The next scheduled Chapter 6 Subcommittee meetings are (these were identified on January 30 but are included here for everyone's convenience):

- Monday, February 9 (9 am to 4 pm) at the IDFG Magic Valley office outside of Jerome.
- Tuesday March 3 (10 am to 4 pm) and March 4 (8 am to 2 pm) at the Boise IDFG office (Nature Center)

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Summary of Follow-up Actions/Assignments

SAC Charter or Mission Statement

- Participants agreed to think more about the pros and cons of a SAC Charter and discuss again at the April 2009 meeting.
- Alison will send out a copy of the appointment letter and any information about the SAC's role that is written in the State Plan.
- Each SAC member should review these documents and draft suggestions for a mission statement and/or charter and send those to Alison by February 20, 2009
- Alison will compile all responses and the group will discuss a mission statement and/or charter for the SAC at the April 2009 SAC meeting.

Fence deterrent research

- Project proponents on new project proposals involving fencing should coordinate with Ann Moser to determine if the project falls within the study area.
- Don and Alison will look into having the graduate student give a presentation on the project at the April or July SAC meeting.

SAC draft letters on China Mountain Wind Power project and Gateway West project

- Alison will send Wendy Pratt examples letters on these projects from LWGs.
- Wendy will provide draft letters for the SAC's April meeting in Dubois.

Updated solicitation and review process for OSC dispersed sage-grouse funding

Date	What
2/15/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute RFP packets (including cover letter, description of process, who to send application form to, application form, etc.) to all of the LWGs via the LWG facilitators and/or IDFG reps.

- 7/1/09 ▪ Proposals due to IDFG
- 7/8/09 ▪ Packet of all proposals distributed to full SAC for review
- 7/15/09 ▪ SAC members submit any questions on the proposals to Ann Moser and Don Kemner.
- Ann and Don will contact project proponents to get answers to the SAC questions.
- Ann and Don will let project proponents know that the SAC will be meeting to discuss the proposals on July 28 and 29 and invite proponents to provide a phone number and be available to answer any additional questions by phone if possible.
- 7/28 and 7/29 ▪ Full SAC will review and rank project proposals and develop recommendation for IDFG and OSC Directors.
- SAC TAT will develop "HIP" form for inclusion in Funding Agreement

Conservation/Mitigation Subcommittee

- Put conservation/mitigation subcommittee report on April SAC agenda. Ann, Don and/or Alison to follow-up with subcommittee members.

Chapter 6 Revision

The next scheduled Chapter 6 Subcommittee meetings are:

- Monday, February 9 (9 am to 4 pm) at the IDFG Magic Valley office outside of Jerome.
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Communication and Information Sharing

- Ann M. will look at updating list of sage-grouse literature (new literature published since 2006 State Plan) and post links on the IDFG website.
- Ann M. will include information on the sage-grouse website in the next newsletter.

Future SAC meeting dates and tentative agenda topics

- **April 17 and 18 – Dubois in coordination with Dubois Grouse Days**
 - Continue discussion SAC charter and/or mission statement
 - Presentation on successful/innovative projects; summary of projects that have been completed to date
 - Review draft infrastructure letters
 - Mitigation subcommittee report
 - Follow-up on SAC TAT offer to help with project proposals
 - Dubois sage-grouse days
 - Chapter 6 subcommittee report/update
- **July 28 & 29 – Boise, IDFG office**
 - Solicitation – proposals due July 1
 - July 8 distribute to DAC
 - Questions from SAC members to project proponents due by July 15 (send to Ann and Don and they will convey to project proponents)
 - Possible presentation grad student on fence project
 - Ann and Don get questions and responses to questions from project proponents
 - Tell project proponents that if they're available by phone SAC might call with additional questions (need # where we can reach them)
 - Full SAC will review projects over 2 days (no subcommittee pre-review).
 - Consider fence grad student report at July meeting
 - USFWS Status Review update
 - BBQ at Alison's house on 28th

- **October 1 and 2 – Magic Valley IDFG Office (outside of Twin Falls)**
 - Agenda topics TBD.

Adjourn

Tom Hemker and Don Kemner thanked everyone for taking the time and effort to attend and participate in the meeting and then adjourned the group.